



Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

# Independent Journalism Consortium in Europe

Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL),  
Department of State

Opportunity number: DFOP0019671

Application deadline: Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026

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***U.S Department of State  
Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
Notice of Funding Opportunity***

**A. Basic Information**

***1. Overview***

|                                       |                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>      | Independent Journalism Consortium for Democratic Resilience in Europe |
| <b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>     | DFOP0019671                                                           |
| <b>Announcement Type</b>              | Initial Announcement                                                  |
| <b>Deadline for Applications</b>      | 11:59PM Tuesday, September 1, 2026                                    |
| <b>Assistance Listing Number</b>      | 19.345                                                                |
| <b>Length of performance period</b>   | Up to 24 months                                                       |
| <b>Number of awards anticipated</b>   | 1 award                                                               |
| <b>Award amount</b>                   | \$1,000,000 (approximately)                                           |
| <b>Total available funding</b>        | \$1,000,000 pending availability of funds                             |
| <b>Type of Funding</b>                | Fiscal Year 2025 Democracy Funds under the Foreign Assistance Act     |
| <b>Anticipated project start date</b> | September 28, 2026                                                    |

**Funding Instrument Type:** Cooperative Agreement

**Project Performance Period:** The proposed project should be completed in 24 months or less.

The Department of State will entertain applications for a continuation grant funded under this award beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

**This notice is subject to availability of funding.**

***2. Executive Summary***

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) announces an open competition for a program to support fact-based independent journalism focused on public policy issues affecting the state of sovereignty, civilizational values, and democracy in Europe. This program will support the production and dissemination of independent, non-partisan reporting and the development of a consortium of journalists and independent media organizations across the European Union (EU) and other European countries. The consortium and the reporting it produces will focus on public policy issues and government regulations as they relate to fundamental freedoms (such as freedoms of religion, expression, assembly, and association), the defense of national sovereignty, and democratic governance.

## **B. Eligibility**

### ***1. Eligible Applicants***

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- U.S.-based non-profit organizations/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- Foreign-based non-profit organizations/NGOs
- Private or public institutions of higher education
- For-profit organizations or businesses

### ***2. Cost Sharing or Matching***

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required for this NOFO and will not improve competitive ranking of an application. Any budget items proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR 200, Subpart E—Cost Principles.

### ***3. Other Eligibility Requirements***

All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

Primary applicants may submit only one application in response to this NOFO. An applicant may be included as a consortium member and/or subgrantee in other applications from other primary applicants.

## **C. Program Description**

### **Overview**

Well-informed citizens are key to the health of any democratic system. Fact-based, independent journalism is essential to provide the public with high-quality, objective information about government actions, the impacts of current laws, and potential policy solutions to critical issues. An overly regulated media environment in Europe risks stifling public debate about a range of critical policy issues. New efforts by certain governments in Europe to rank or prioritize “trusted media” also risks censorship of disfavored media outlets and weaponization of media for partisan ends. This program seeks to develop an independent journalism consortium in Europe to produce well-researched independent, non-partisan journalism that will inform public policy debates on issues critical to the defense of sovereignty, civilizational values, and democratic governance.

Reporting produced under the program will focus on identifying and researching the long-term impacts of public policies on democratic governance and the protection of fundamental freedoms in Europe, as well as their connections to broader social, cultural, and political trends. The program will produce unique in-depth, fact-based reporting that surfaces and elucidates overlooked or misunderstood public policy issues for the purpose of informing public debate and improving democratic governance. Potential topics include the impacts of national government

and EU laws, policies, and regulations on: mass migration; freedoms of religion, expression, assembly, and association; national sovereignty and identity; demographic trends; and family formation and related issues. Reporting should also examine public attitudes toward current government policies and new policy ideas related to these and other topics, while deliberately refraining from endorsement or favoritism to any particular political party, figure, or ideology.

The program will establish and/or develop a consortium of journalists across multiple countries in the EU and/or other European countries. This consortium will facilitate information sharing, professional development, and joint reporting on topics affecting multiple countries.

The program will support experienced reporters and independent media organizations with an established track record of producing fact-based independent journalism on public policy and its impact on social, cultural, and/or political trends. The geographic focus of the program is the European Union and other European countries. Project activities must involve reporting and consortium members across at least three countries in this geographic area.

## ***1. Goals and Objectives***

**Goal:** The European public has sustained access to high-quality independent reporting on a wide range of critical fundamental freedoms and democracy-related policy issues, resulting in more informed public debate.

**Objective 1: Produce and disseminate well-researched, fact-based, unique, and independent reporting to inform public debate about crucial policy issues affecting democracy and fundamental freedoms in Europe.**

Applicants must clearly articulate the issue sets they will seek to report on, how their approach to reporting on these issues will demonstrate high journalistic standards, and how this reporting will fill a needed information gap on policy issues affecting fundamental freedoms and democracy. Proposed reporting should involve long-form, deeply researched articles, and must not be opinion or editorial content. Competitive applications will focus on describing long-term trends and impacts, not day-to-day political reporting on isolated events. Applicants should demonstrate the capabilities and planning necessary to analyze and report on public opinion, government policies and their impacts on the public, and social and cultural trends related to democratic governance and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

Illustrative topics for reporting may include but are not limited to:

- The impact of mass migration on safety and rule of law, the role of government policy in contributing to mass migration, and policy proposals to effectively address negative externalities of mass migration trends.
- The impact of laws and government regulations on freedoms of expression and religion, and political and social developments with the potential to strengthen the protections of these freedoms.
- Public attitudes toward national sovereignty and identity, including attitudes toward national identities vis-a-vis a supra-national “European” identity, and the role and impact of European Union policies on national-level freedoms and politics.

- Trends in public attitudes over time regarding religion and secularism, including the role of religion in public life, and the dynamics between these trends and public policies.
- The underlying causes of declining demographic trends in Europe, including how government policy interacts with cultural shifts and public attitudes toward family formation.

Applications must include a detailed dissemination plan, including type of media and platforms that will be used, metrics to assess reach and/or engagement, existing or planned capabilities or assets that will facilitate content dissemination, and a logical rationale for the proposed plan.

**Objective 2: Establish and/or strengthen a non-partisan consortium of reporters and independent journalism organizations focused on policy and democratic governance in Europe.**

The program will develop and support a consortium that includes journalists and independent media organizations based across all of the proposed countries of operation. The consortium will provide a forum for reporters and organizations to share information, conduct joint reporting projects on common trends and themes across the EU and other European countries, access training and professional development opportunities, and strengthen ties among reporters and organizations working on similar policy issues.

Illustrative activities under Objective 2 could include but are not limited to:

- Developing peer-to-peer information sharing channels.
- Training and professional development activities on topics of interest across the consortium.
- Joint reporting efforts across organizations and countries.
- Meetings and events to develop consortium strategy and activities.
- Efforts to establish the consortium as a distinct entity, including legal registration, organizational development planning, and fundraising activities.

Applications should clearly articulate how the independent journalism consortium under the project will function as a distinct entity. The program may establish a new consortium or build upon and strengthen an existing consortium. Applicants must also demonstrate experience and capabilities in collaborating with independent reporters and independent journalism organizations.

DRL encourages applicants to articulate a consortium-based implementing model. Applications must involve substantial and substantive subgrant, contracting, and/or partnership arrangements with multiple individual and organizations. DRL recommends a minimum of thirty percent of funding be dedicated to subgrants and subcontracts to work with smaller implementing partners, unless there are clearly demonstrated and articulated limitations in the application documents. Applicants should demonstrate their understanding of the program requirements through both the structure of their partnerships and a demonstrated capability to establish and manage such arrangements. Applicants should also outline their approach to ensuring that the consortium will be non-partisan in terms of its membership and the content it generates.

All proposed activities must be consistent with the Establishment Clause and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

### Anticipated Results

DRL anticipates that the program will result in the following outcomes:

- Increased quality and availability of fact-based reporting on critical policy issues in the EU and other European countries.
- Increased impact of independent, fact-based, unique reporting on public debate about overlooked and/or misunderstood policy topics of critical relevance to democratic governance.
- Increased collaboration, information sharing, and joint projects among independent journalists and media organizations across the EU and other European countries on policy issues of mutual interest.

Projects awarded under this solicitation are subject to availability of funds and terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement, including high-income country waivers as needed.

In addition, competitive proposals will meet the following criteria:

- Proposals should describe clear performance indicators, data collection methods, and how progress toward objectives will be measured. The project's monitoring and evaluation plan should include a limited number of output and outcome indicators that effectively track the intended results outlined above. This plan should include clear targets for each project year and the life of the project. Applicants are encouraged to consider qualitative data collection in addition to quantitative data to fully assess the impact of the project. Applicants must explain how feedback from beneficiaries will be incorporated into ongoing program adjustments and how lessons learned will be documented and shared.
- Demonstrate a plan for ensuring sustainability of the project's activities.
- Consistent with the Foreign Assistance Act and applicable State/Foreign Operations appropriations provisions governing democracy and political party assistance, all proposed activities must be nonpartisan and offered on a fair and equitable basis to all democratic political parties, and implementers will not seek to influence the outcome of any election.
- Consistent with the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) policy and the Foreign Assistance Act, all reporting should maintain rigorous nonpartisanship and refrain from promotion or endorsement of radical ideological practices, policy initiatives, or advocacy including gender ideology, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and climate justice.
- Applicants should allocate a proportion of the funding as subaward agreements, whereby subrecipients implement program activities that contribute to meeting the program goal and objectives. While the application will be strengthened by inclusion of at least 1-2 identified subrecipients at the time of application, including letter(s) of commitment, other subrecipients may be identified and approved by DRL during the period of performance of the award.

### **Program Requirements:**

- The organization will submit to DRL for approval an annual workplan that includes a timeline, planned milestones, and short descriptions of all workshops and events, and a list of stakeholder groups and organizations participating. This workplan is due 45 days after the grant is signed and annually thereafter.
- The organization will submit to DRL for approval a Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative to describe the organization's approach to monitoring and evaluation, including proof and verification of results outlined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and methodologies for internal and external evaluations.
- The organization will submit to DRL for approval the criteria and job descriptions of any Key Personnel proposed under the award; Key Personnel must be submitted for DRL approval within 30 days of the award being signed.
- The organization may be subject to annual site visits by the program monitoring team.
- Grantees must notify their Grants Officer Representative and their Technical Program Officer prior to any international travel, even if pre-approved in the grant budget. Grantees must also notify their Grants Officer Representative and their Technical Program Officer regarding any travel-related incidents resulting from any programmatic activities under any project or grant, USG or otherwise.
- The organization will submit to DRL for approval any evaluation, research, or survey methodologies.
- DRL may also provide technical assistance or subject matter expertise, reviews, and comments on draft materials, reports, or publications.

## ***2. Substantial Involvement***

If a cooperative agreement is determined to be the most appropriate implementing mechanism, the Department of State will be substantially involved in carrying out the following various aspects of this cooperative agreement. Examples of substantial involvement may include but are not limited to:

- **Workplan:** DRL will play an active role in shaping overall program strategy and will approve the project workplan to ensure technical input and alignment with U.S. strategic objectives.
- **Key Personnel:** DRL will approve key personnel. On this project, key personnel will include a Project Director. Additional key personnel roles may be proposed by the applicant and/or DRL prior to award.
- **Subaward and Subcontract selection:** DRL will review and approve all subaward and subcontract agreements before they are finalized.
- **Program Coordination:** DRL will help coordinate and deconflict with other related donor-funded initiatives, using its unique convening power to ensure cross fertilization when beneficial.
- **Ongoing policy and technical consultations:** DRL will participate in regular monthly check-ins (unless otherwise determined by the GOR) and technical review discussions with the project implementers.

The specific review and approval points and procedures for DRL's substantial involvement will be negotiated with the successful applicant prior to award issuance and reflected in the final award.

## **D. Application Contents and Format**

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

### **Content of Application**

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be in 10-point font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

The following documents are **required**:

#### ***1. Mandatory application forms***

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations)
- SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs)

#### ***2. Summary Page (optional)***

Cover sheet stating the applicant's name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

#### ***3. Proposal (15 pages maximum)***

The proposal should contain sufficient information such that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the State Department and/or U.S. government agencies. Applications should specifically highlight recent awards related to the research and mitigation of digital threats and attacks affecting independent voices.

- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Project Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Project Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Project Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal. Include a logic model as appropriate.
- **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Resumes are not required at this time. Instead, provide only the selection criteria your program will apply throughout the grant period of performance when filling key positions.
- **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the timeframe of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Applicant’s plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

#### **4. Budget Justification Narrative**

After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate file to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section *I. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

#### **5. Attachments**

- A line-item budget, expanding upon the summary categories found in the SF-424A. Subgrantee budgets, if known at time of submission, should also be included as tabs (please see template attached to NOFO).
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, include your latest NICRA as a PDF file.
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities
- Position descriptions and criteria for Key Personnel
- Applicants are required to include a line-item budget, in addition to the above forms. Subgrantee line item budget and budget notes should be included if known at time of application. This line-item budget must follow the cost categories in the SF-424 forms. Budget notes should clearly explain the cost basis of line items.

## E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

### 1. *Address to Request Application Package*

Application forms required above are available at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/>.

### 2. *Department of State Contacts*

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: [DRL-PRU-Solicitation@state.gov](mailto:DRL-PRU-Solicitation@state.gov).

Questions and Answers or FAQ will be posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to answer questions from all potential applicants.

For assistance with MyGrants accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsism.servicenow.com/ilms>. Customer support is available 24/7.

For assistance with Grants.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please call the Contact Center at +1 (800) 518-4726 or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

### 3. *Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)*

#### **Required Registrations**

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a subrecipient.

***Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.***

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov) using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

[NCAGE Code Request Tool \(nato.int\)](https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx)

## **Exemptions**

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See [2 CFR 25.110](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-25/subpart-1/section-25.110) for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

## **4. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications are due no later than *September 1, 11:59PM, EDT*

## **5. *Funding Restrictions***

### **i. Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**

None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

### **ii. Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border**

None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal representation in the United States.

Funds may only be used for cash cards for use in the country in which they are provided or to facilitate assisted voluntary returns and other purposes that do not encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. The provision of humanitarian assistance is permitted.

### **iii. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws**

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

- 1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
- 2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

### **iv. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements**

Applicants are advised that International Higher Education institutes (IHEs) must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

- 1) Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

v. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000:

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- 1) To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a);

The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175(b)(5).

- 2) That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on their website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

vi. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities

(a) *Definitions.*

*American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity* means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>

*FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system* means an unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by an American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity.

*Unmanned aircraft* means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.

*Unmanned aircraft system* means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

(b) *Prohibition.* Recipients of funding under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:

(1) delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;

(2) Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and

(3) Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system .

c) *Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.* The prohibitions described above will not apply if the agency determines that an exemption, exception, or waiver applies and the award indicates that such a determination has been made. [See sections 1823 through 1825 and 1832 of Public Law 118-31 ( [41 U.S.C. 3901](#) note prec.) for statutory requirements pertaining to exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.].

vii. Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA)

Applicants for foreign assistance awards should be aware of requirements in 2 CFR Part 602, 603, and 604.

These policies are referred to collectively as the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) Policy.

**602:** The award term imposes certain abortion-related requirements on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

**603:** The award term imposes certain requirements relating to gender ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

**604:** The award term imposes certain requirements relating to discriminatory equity ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

The Department recognizes there are costs associated with these policies. Potential one-time and recurring costs the Department identifies for recipients and grantees are for familiarization with the policy, development and delivery of organizational training and implementation guidance, routine compliance monitoring, and recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

## **6. Other Submission Requirements**

All application materials must be submitted electronically through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) or MyGrants. DRL is not responsible for disqualification due to applicants not being registered before the due date, system or technical errors in MyGrants or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process.

Applicants must save a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM ET). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate help desk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., no response within 48 hours), they may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section E.2. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate help desk.

## **F. Application Review Information**

### **1. Review Criteria**

Each application will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below.

**Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea:** The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The proposal does not include any activities contrary to any standing Executive Orders. For a full list, see <https://www.federalregister.gov/>.

**Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants:** The organization has expertise in its stated field and has the internal controls in place to manage federal funds. This includes a financial management system and a bank account. If sub-awards are proposed, applicant demonstrates experience managing subawards.

**Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives:** Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

**Budget:** The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

**Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured.

**Sustainability:** Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.

## ***2. Indirect Costs***

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

## ***3. Review and Selection Process***

A review committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

## ***4. Risk Review***

### ***i. Risk factors***

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

- a. Financial stability
- b. Management systems and standards
- c. History of performance
- d. Audit reports and findings
- e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

### ***ii. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov***

The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313)

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

## **G. Award Notices**

The award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and counter-signature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

### **Payment Method:**

Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

Recipients may not draw down funds without the affirmative authorization of the Department of State. In addition, recipients must submit, with each PMS payment request, a detailed explanation justifying the request.

## **H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration**

### ***1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements***

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.
- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS
- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders. A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

## 2. **Reporting**

**Reporting Requirements:** Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted.

The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the required form for financial reports and must be submitted in PMS, and a copy of the report submitted in PMS then uploaded to the award file in MyGrants. Program reports uploaded to the award file in MyGrants must include a narrative as described below, as well as Program Indicators (or other mutually agreed upon format approved by the Grants Officer). Indicators will be reviewed and negotiated during the final stages of issuing an award on a program-by-program basis.

**Narrative progress reports** should reflect the focus on measuring the program's progress on the overarching objectives and should be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW) and in the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Narrative. An assessment of the overall project's achievements should be included in each progress report. Where relevant, progress reports should include the following sections:

- Relevant contextual information (limited)
- Explanation and evaluation of significant activities of the reporting period and how the activities reflect progress toward achieving objectives, including meeting benchmarks/targets as set in the approved Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan. In addition, attach the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan, comparing the target and actual numbers for the indicators
- How relevant communities are being included in program activities
- Any qualitative impact or success stories from the project, when possible
- Copy of baseline, mid-term, and/or final evaluation report(s) conducted by an external evaluator; if applicable
- Relevant supporting documentation or products related to the project activities (such as articles, meeting agendas, participant surveys, photos, manuals, etc) as separate attachments
- Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and a corrective action plan with an updated timeline of activities
- Reasons why established goals were not met
- Data for the required indicator(s) for the quarter as well as aggregate data by fiscal year
- Program Indicators or other mutually agreed upon format approved by the Grants Officer
- Proposed activities for the next quarter
- Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable

A final narrative and financial report must also be submitted within 120 days after the expiration of the award.

**Foreign Assistance Data Review:** As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation

and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in [2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters](#).

### **3. Branding and Marking**

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at [Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System](#). Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual [10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions](#).

For more information, visit: <https://brand.america.gov/>

## **I. Other Information**

### **Guidelines for Budget Justification**

**Personnel and Fringe Benefits:** Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

**Travel:** Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

**Equipment:** Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$10,000 per unit.

**Supplies:** List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$10,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

**Contractual:** Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

**Other Direct Costs:** Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

**Indirect Costs:** These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.